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Motion graphics and storytelling



Exploring a new way of telling through contextualisation and the development of *Philippe Lars Watch*, a modern day fairytale.

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MOTION GRAPHICS AND STORYTELLING

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1 ABSTRACT

How can the techniques and form associated with motion graphics contribute to film storytelling?

I describe motion graphics as a hybrid medium that utilises design and formal content to communicate graphical, moving image solutions. This project is an investigation of how a film that sits between motion graphics and dominant cinema (another hybrid medium) may work. In order to understand how the motion graphic film story will best communicate, I needed to explore the relationships between what motion graphics is (its form) and how it works (its function). I had seen a relationship between the multilayered narrative stories, termed fantastic, that have emerged from South America and motion graphics as a multilayered hybrid medium. I required a theoretical base to develop this work into a motion graphic film. Although motion graphics are common, particularly in advertising, music videos and opening film titles, theory that discusses motion graphics is limited; Manovich described academics as “having remained blind to it” (Manovich, 2006, p. 5).

As a means to develop my script this investigation uses a mixed method approach. I began with an interpretational method engaging in background research into the heritage of motion graphics and early film formalism. A significant realisation was that as art or design forms develop they often demonstrate interplay with other arts. I found that while dominant cinema primarily demonstrates a storytelling function with strong reference to theatre and the novel, motion graphics demonstrates a conceptual form of communication developed from its stronger heritage in fine art. There is also some suggestion that there was interplay between early Russian experimental animations and Soviet montage theory. This nexus is apparent today in both the value systems of motion graphic practitioners, and the works themselves.

I went on to examine the use of motion graphics, in titles and within feature films. I began exploring systems of narration based on traditional plot structures, in contrast to those based on style, termed parametric. I built models to support theory and practice. I used this method to support a process of conceptualization and production design through workshopping and storyboarding in the development of a motion graphic screen play. I developed a new script structure to accommodate my new story structure and shot the film. It became apparent that the greatest challenge for motion graphic film makers and designers is going to be resolving the problems associated with the layering of content and effectively communicating through interweaving simultaneous narrative lines.

I required a system to consider the intersections between the disciplines and the interesting interconnections in terms of how various media narrated. My final model shows how a narrative system including three dominant spheres emerged, through which strands of narrative could weave. The first sphere relates to gestalt theory, particularly the concept of closure. We make our audiences fill the gaps. The second, comes from the discipline of semiotics and relates to the concepts of denotation and connotation; the idea being that one strand dominates whilst the others provide richness and broader associations. The third is that which all films demonstrate and relates to Eisenstein’s “third meaning” the concept that combining two ideas creates a new idea (Eisenstein, 1945/1977). This is commonly referred to as idea A plus idea B creating new idea C (Monaco, 1981), (Shaw, 2007) et al.

Finally I develop some tests, evaluate them, then go on to produce a clip as the beginning of the post production phase of this project; a workbook clip that begins to look at how some of these concepts at play.